

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8148

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IS, SY

SUBJECT: RABIN ON POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA

1. SUMMARY: IN FOUR SEPARATE INTERVIEWS APPEARING IN SEPTEMBER 5 ISRAELI PRESS, PRIME MINISTER RABIN HAS GIVEN HIS POST-INTERIM AGREEMENT ASSESSMENT OF THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA. IN THEM HE STRESSES THAT THERE IS LITTLE ROOM FOR AN INTERIM AGREEMENT ON THE GOLAN, THAT ISRAEL HAS MADE NO COMMITMENT WITH RESPECT TO SYRIA, THAT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS WILL NOT BE ABANDONED AS RESULT OF ANY INTERIM SETTLEMENT ON THE GOLAN, AND THAT ISRAELI SATISFACTION WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT WILL AFFECT ITS WILLINGNESS TO TALK TO SYRIA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN INTERVIEW WITH HAARETZ (CAREFULLY WORDED TO CLARIFY APPARENT MISREPRESENTATION OF HIS VIEWS IN RECENT ARTICLE) RABIN GAVE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: BEGIN QUOTE...THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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SYRIA IS ACTUALLY ALMOST NON-EXISTENT, BECAUSE THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF A WITHDRAWAL ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF SUCH A SETTLEMENT....IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIA

THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF INTERFERING WITH ANY ISRAELI SETTLEMENT OR WITH OUR DEFENSE STRUCTURE.

IT FOLLOWS THAT ALL THAT CAN BE DONE WITH SYRIA IN AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT IS TO EFFECT CHANGES IN THE PRESENT BUFFER ZONE, NOT INCLUDING THE HERMON AREA, AND "COSMETIC CHANGES" OF A FEW HUNDRED METERS IN A FEW SECTORS OF THE LINE, WITH THE RESERVATIONS I HAVE MENTIONED.

ACCORDINGLY, IT IS PREFERABLE IN THE ISRAEL-SYRIAN CONTEXT...

TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, AFTER THE INTERIM SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT HAS BECOME A FACT AND AFTER A TRIAL PERIOD FOR THE SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT THAT WILL VERIFY OUR EXPECTATIONS OF THAT SETTLEMENT. END QUOTE

3. IN INTERVIEW WITH YEDIOT AHARANOT, RABIN ADMITTED THAT QUESTION OF SYRIA WILL ARISE WHEN UNDOF MANDATE EXPIRES ON NOVEMBER 30. ASKED ABOUT A POSSIBLE COMMITMENT TO THE U.S. TO EXPLORE NEW ARRANGEMENTS ON THE GOLAN AND, IN PARTICULAR WHAT PRESIDENT FORD MEANT WHEN HE SAID THAT U.S. WILL NOT ALLOW STAGNATION, RABIN ANSWERED QUOTE I WILL NOT TAKE IT UPON MYSELF TO INTERPRET WHAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SAYS...BUT THERE IS NO COMMITMENT WHATSOEVER IN RESPECT OF SYRIA, EXCEPT OF COURSE A WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIA. END QUOTE

4. IN SAME YEDIOT INTERVIEW, RABIN REPEATED HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT THAT, IN AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, HE SEES NO POSSIBILITY OF LEAVING THE GOLAN HEIGHTS ALTHOUGH THAT DOES NOT MEAN KEEPING TO THE PRESENT LINE. HE ALSO SAID THAT WHENEVER THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT, IT HAS DONE SO IN THE BELIEF THAT IT WILL NOT BE ABANDONED.

5. IN DISCUSSION WITH ISRAELI INFORMATION SERVICES, REPORTED IN ALL NEWSPAPERS, RABIN SAID AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA WAS NOT FEASIBLE SINCE SYRIA WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL OF "ONLY 200-300 METERS AND I DON'T SEE A POSSIBILITY OF A TERRITORIAL CONCESSION THAT IS NOT MEASURED IN METERS." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT "SOUTH OF KUNEITRA THE RIDGE IS A FIRST-CLASS DEFENCE LINE AND WE CAN'T GIVE UP EVEN ONE METER." HE ADDED THAT THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AREA NORTH OF KUNEITRA, ALONG VARDIT AND HERMONIT.

6. ASKED IN INTERVIEW WITH DAVAR IF HE EXPECTED THE U.S. TO USE A "BULLDOZER" IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA AS IT HAD AT ONE STAGE DURING TALKS WITH EGYPT, RABIN REPLIED "THE U.S. DID NOT USE A BULLDOZER. NOT AT ALL."

7. COMMENT: THERE IS ESSENTIALLY NOTHING NEW OF SUBSTANCE IN RABIN'S REMARKS. FACT THAT PRESS IS VIRTUALLY BLANKETED WITH THEM ON DAY BEFORE JEWISH NEW YEAR WEEKEND SEEMS DESIGNED TO REASSURE ISRAELI PUBLIC, WHICH HAD BEEN BOMBARDED SINCE BEFORE SHUTTLE BEGAN WITH PRESS SPECULATION THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA WOULD BE

FORCED ON ISRAEL AS RESULT OF AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT.
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